

**T**he lives of two terrified people hung in the balance as a masked gunman stood above them, their tearful faces buried in the floor with a pistol aimed at the back of their heads. He yelled — “Where’s the money?! Where’s the f\*\*\*ing money?!”

It was late on Jan. 22, 2011, well past closing time at Richmond’s Kentucky Fried Chicken when 39-year-old Michael McCullen pushed his way in the back door of the restaurant to empty the cash registers. When he realized he couldn’t get any cash from them, he became infuriated. He told the employees he was going to shoot them, and he had them ready for their deaths when Richmond Police Senior Patrolman Kelly Rouse stormed in.

McCullen, a convicted felon, instead lost his life that night, when he raised his pistol to shoot Rouse. He was met with a single shot from the officer’s shotgun that ended the intense standoff and left the innocent unharmed. Recently, in honor of his bravery, he was honored as the 2011 Outstanding Law Enforcement Officer of the Year by the American Police Hall of Fame and Museum in Florida.

Rouse, a seven-year RPD veteran, also has served Madison County as a paramedic for more than 14 years and spent 20 years as an infantryman in the U.S. Marines. He takes his duty to protect the public seriously — he clearly has devoted his life to it. For that service, Rouse also was awarded a Silver Star for bravery and designation as a “Knight Chevalier” from the Venerable Order of the Knights of Michael the Archangel, “in recognition of a pledge to support efforts in a worldwide battle against crime and to carry on the modern-day tradition to protect the weak and hungry against all evil doers,” a proclamation states.

**We are always getting feedback of some sort, whether it’s negative or positive.** But, it seems like in the past year, we have gotten a lot of positive feedback. Especially with the detectives who have finally broken a murder case with two missing people. The past two days, everywhere I go I’m getting a pat on the back — not me personally — but the department. I get, ‘Good job, tell the police officers who are working the case we appreciate them,’ and it’s really good.

“*So, I gathered myself, came in the back door and raised my shotgun. I pointed it at the bad guy and I said, ‘Drop your weapon.’ I mean, I’m yelling, ‘Drop your weapon! Drop your weapon!’*”

**After the shooting incident**, my name was kept out of the papers, but you know, word spreads by mouth and everything. There was a lot of public support and a lot of support amongst the police department here. There’s not very many times that officers are involved in shooting incidents and the department really handled it well. They made me feel like they had my back, that they were going to support me. And the people who were being held hostage at KFC — I mean, I’ve never been in KFC since that day, but if I drive past, the manager will come out in the parking lot, wave me over and shake my hand. If I see him out on a call in a neighborhood, he’ll come over. He introduced me to his children because he said he thought he would never see his children again after that night. Positive feedback like that is what I like from the job. Knowing that you’re actually making a difference in your community.

**January 22. It was almost quitting time.** I remember we got a call to assist EMS in regard to a diabetic emergency — somebody was being combative because of low blood sugar. If you hit a good golf ball shot you could probably hit KFC from where I was. The paramedics were just wrapping up, so I was standing on the front porch with them and Officer Nick Duvall. A call came out that there was an armed robbery in progress at KFC. I could literally step out away from the ambulance and see KFC. So me and Duvall got in our cars and proceeded toward the KFC. We didn’t know it, but another officer (Mason Dale) was right across the street at Wal-Mart.

We all three arrived simultaneously at KFC. Officer Duvall positioned himself on the west side of the building and Mason Dale positioned himself on the east side, kind of the front of the building. We had no communication, we just did it. I pulled my vehicle around back. I’m thinking, if there is an armed robbery in progress, I’m getting my shotgun out. Anytime I know there is a weapon involved, I’m getting a bigger weapon than the guy I’m going up

against. So I get my shotgun, racked the shell in there, and as I’m getting it out of the trunk, I can hear somebody yelling and arguing. So I look over and the back door where they take out the garbage is open, just slightly.

I walked over, and when I peeked in the door — it’s the kitchen/food-prep area. It’s kind of like a hallway with an open area off to the side where they prep the food. I see two people face down on the floor, spread eagle. And there’s a dark figure standing over top of them. He’s got a pistol pointed at the back of their heads and he’s screaming, ‘Where’s the money?! Where’s the f\*\*\*ing money?!’

**I’m standing there looking at him, I back up and think, ‘Man, this is real.’** He’s still yelling and cussing and I’m thinking, he’s going to kill these people because he has them in the execution position.

I didn’t know there were two other employees who had barricaded themselves in the manager’s office. They had seen what was going on, shut the door, locked it and were on the phone with 911. So I gathered myself, came in the back door and raised my shotgun. I pointed it at the bad guy and I said, ‘Drop your weapon.’ I mean, I’m yelling, ‘Drop your weapon! Drop your weapon!’

**The guy looks up and he has this big scary Halloween mask on.** (Interviewer: What kind of mask?) I don’t know, because I was focused on the gun.

When he looks up and sees me, he starts backing up. So as he’s backing up, I’m walking forward and I’ve got him right in my sights. He sees I’m coming after him and he turns and runs out of sight. He’s up behind the bar and there’s a pop machine right there. So I come up to the cash register and I’m telling him, ‘Drop your weapon. Come out with your hands up. Drop your weapon!’ So I step in between him and the people who are laying on the floor. I don’t know what they’re doing because I’m focusing on this guy, where if he peeks >>